

Message Text

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 PARAMARIBO 0685

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (YOUNG, ANDREW NS
SUBJECT: THE SETTING IN SURINAM

SUMMARY: THIS CABLE SETS THE PRESENT POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SCENE IN SURINAM IN CONNECTION WITH THE VISIT TWO WEEKS HENCE OF AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO THE UN ANDREW YOUNG AND HIS PARTY. SURINAM HAS JUST BEGUN AN INTESIVE ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN WHICH, ISSUES ASIDE, THE BASIC QUESTION WILL BE WHETHER THE MINORITY CREOLES WILL CONTINUE TO GOVERN THE COUNTRY, OR WHETHER THE HINDUSTANIS, ALSO A MINORITY, WILL GET BACK A SHARE OF THE POWER THEY HELD BEFORE 1973. WHILE THE CAMPAIGN (AT LEAST IN PUBLIC PRINT AND OPEN SPEECHES) WILL BE CAST IN TERMS OF ISSUES, UNDERNEATH THE SURINAMERS LOOK UPON IT AS PART OF THE STRUGGLE FOR ETHNIC DOMINATION. IN A NATION ENDOWED WITH CONSIDERABLE NATURAL RESOURCES AND DUTCH LARGESSE, THE ECONOMY IS STANDING STILL AND INFLATION SERIOUS. IT IS ALMOST UNIVERSALLY SAID THAT THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEM IS HOW TO MOTIVATE THE POPULATION TO GET DOWN TO WORK WHILE THEY CAN ENJOY AN EASY LIFE WITHOUT IT, BUT EQUALLY FUNDAMENTAL IS THE LACK OF SUFFICIENT NUMBERS OF TRAINED

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PERSONNEL WHO CAN PLAN AND CARRY OUT THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR WHICH FINANCING IS AT HAND IN AMOUNTS FAR MORE THAN ADEQUATE.

1. IN THE FOUR YEARS PRECEDING 1973, SURINAM WAS GOVERNED (INTERNALLY, SINCE IT FOREIGN AND DEFENSE AFFAIRS WERE STILL UNDER THE NETHERLANDS GOVERNMENT) BY A CABINET IN

WHICH THE HINDUSTANI PARTY VHP UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF J. LACHMON HAD THE LARGER VOICE, BUT WITH AN ONLY SLIGHTLY LESSER CREOLE PARTY IN COALITION, WITH THE PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF BEING FROM THE JUNIOR CREOLE PARTNER. THIS WAS UPSET IN 1973 BY A SWEEPING VICTORY OF THE NATIONAL PARTY OF SURINAM (NPS) UNDER HENCK ARRON, WITH TWO OTHER CREOLE PARTIES AND ONE JAVANESE IN COMBINATION WITH HIM. THE CREOLE PARTY WHICH HAD BEEN ALLIED WITH THE HINDU-
STANIS WAS WIPED OUT, GAINING NOT A SINGLE SEAT IN PARLIAMENT. SINCE THEN, THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ENTIRELY IN THE HANDS OF THE CREOLES (WITH THEIR RATHER SILENT JAVANESE ALLIES) WHILE THE HINDUSTANIS, WHO ACTUALLY OUTNUMBER THE CREOLES BY ABOUT 37 PER CENT TO 33 PER CENT, HAVE BEEN EXCLUDED FROM PARTICIPATION AFTER MANY YEARS OF INCLUSION IN ONE CABINET OR ANOTHER.

2. AS THE TIME FOR INDEPENDENCE APPROACHED IN 1975, THE HINDUSTANIS FEARED AND TO A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE OPPOSED INDEPENDENCE, WHICH THE CREOLES ARDENTLY WANTED. THE HINDUSTANIS FEARED THAT THE DEPARTURE OF THE DUTCH WOULD MEAN A CREOLIZATION OF THE ENTIRE COUNTRY AND AN END TO THE SEPARATE COMMUNAL LAWS AND CUSTOMS BY WHICH THE HINDUSTANIS HAVE PRESERVED THEIR LANGUAGE, THEIR RELIGION (BOTH HINDU AND MOSLEM) THEIR CUSTOMS AND THEIR SEPARATE IDENTITY WITHIN THE SOCIETY. THE CREOLES, ON THE OTHER HAND, WHO HAVE BEEN HERE FOR THREE CENTRIES, LOOK UPON
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THE HINDUSTANIS AND ALSO THE JAVANESE (ABOUT 15 PER CENT OF THE POPULATION), WHO WERE BROUGHT IN BY THE DUTCH AS INDENTURED LABORERS, AS NEWCOMERS AND INTERLOPERS. THE CREOLES WANT TO SEE THEIR CULTURE AND WAY OF LIFE (AFRO-AMERICAN-CARIBBEAN-CHRISTIAN) AS THE ESSENCE OF SURINAM, AND, WHILE SOMETIMES GIVING LIP-SERVICE TO RESPECT FOR THE SEPARATE HINDUSTANI AND JAVANESE CULTURES, WANT TO SEE THESE INTEGRATED IN THE KIND OF SURINAM THAT THE CREOLES THINK OF WHEN THEY SALUTE THE FLAG AND SING THE NATIONAL ANTHEM IN THE (CREOLE) SURINAM LANGUAGE. NEVERTHELESS, INDEPENDENCE CAME ABOUT, ARRON AND LACHMON EMBRACED IN AN EXCESS OF EUPHORIA, AND THE MUCH-FEARED COMMUNAL STRIFE, CLOSING OF TEMPLES AND MOSQUES, ETC. DID NOT OCCUR. WHAT DID OCCUR, HOWEVER, PARTICULARLY IN THE YEAR OR TWO PRECEDING INDEPENDENCE, WAS AN EXODUS FROM THE COUNTRY OF EDUCATED AND TRAINED PEOPLE OF ALL KINDS, FROM BUSINESSMEN TO ECONOMISTS TO ELECTRICIANS TO PLUMBERS TO WHAT-HAVE-YOU. THE SYSTEM WILL NOT BE ABLE TO REPLACE THESE PEOPLE, MUCH OF THE CREAM OF THE TECHNICAL SOCIETY, FOR A GENERATION, NOR CAN MORE THAN A TINY FRACTION OF THEM BE ENTICED BACK FROM HOLLAND WHERE THEIR INCOMES ARE AT LEAST SEVERAL TIMES OVER THAT WHAT

THEY WOULD BE HERE.

3. AS PART OF THE INDEPENDENCE DEAL WITH LACHMON, ARRON PROMISED NEW ELECTION WITHIN EIGHT MONTHS AFTER INDEPENDENCE, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN JUNE, 1976. ALTHOUGH HE HAS DENIED MAKING A CLEAR-CUT COMMITMENT, IT WAS CERTAINLY TAKEN THAT WAY BY LACHMON AND THE PUBLIC. WHEN ELECTION WERE NOT HELD LAST YEAR, LACHMON MOUNTED A STORM OF PROTEST, BUT TO NO AVAIL. SOME OBSERVERS ALLEGED THAT LACHMON HIMSELF DID NOT HAVE HIS HEART IN THE DEMAND FOR EARLY ELECTIONS BECAUSE SO MANY OF HIS OWN HINDUSTANI SUPPORTERS HAD FLED THE COUNTRY AS A RESULT OF HIS DOOM-CRYING ABOUT INDEPENDENCE, AND HE WANTED MORE TIME TO GET THEM BACK. BE THAT AS IT MAY, THE TERM OF PARLIAMENT
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HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO RUN OUT IT ALLOTTED FOUR YEARS AND THE ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD ON OCTOBER 31, WITH THE NEW PARLIAMENT TO TAKE OFFICE IN DECEMBER.

4. FOR EACH MAJOR GROUP, THAT OF ARRON AND THAT OF LACHMON, THE PROBLEM IS TO ATTRACT SUPPORT OUTSIDE ITS OWN ETHNIC CONSTITUENCY. THE JAVANESE WERE WITH ARRON AND HELPED HIM WIN LAST TIME, BUT THERE IS THE EMBARRASSING CASE OF EX-MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE SOEMITA, LEADER OF THE JAVANESE PARTY, WHO WAS FIRED AND LANGUISHES IN JAIL AWAITING TRIAL (AUGUST 3) FOR BRIBERY AND EXTORTION IN THE ALLOCATION OF PUBLIC LANDS TO FARMERS. BUT THE CASE IS NOT AT ALL CLEAR. WILL THE JAVANESE DESERT ARRON BECAUSE ARRON'S JAVANESE MINISTER GOT CAUGHT WITH HIS HAND IN THE TILL? MANY SAY NO, AND THERE HAVE CERTAINLY BEEN PRO-SOEMITA DEMONSTRATIONS, FROM JAVANESE WHO SAY THAT HE WAS ONLY DOING WHAT HE COULD TO HELP THEM GET CHOICE LANDS, EVEN IF IT TOOK A LITTLE MONEY, AND AFTER ALL OTHER MINISTERS TAKE MONEY TOO, THEY ASSERT. BUT ANGER MAY BE DIRECTED AT ARRON NOT BECAUSE ONE OF HIS MINISTERS MAY HAVE BEEN CROOKED, BUT RATHER BECAUSE HE DID NOT PROTECT THAT MINISTER INSTEAD OF THROWING HIM TO THE PROSECUTERS. THE KTIPI, SOEMITA'S PARTY, FORMALLY BROKE WITH ARRON AND LEFT THE COALITION GOVERNMENT, BUT WENT SCUTTILING BACK IN A WEEK OR TWO LATER WHEN THE DARKNESS OUTSIDE SEEMED EVEN

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MORE FORBIDDING. MEANWHILE, ANOTHER JAVANESE GROUP, HEADED BY A JAVANESE WHO ACTUALLY GOT INTO PARLIAMENT LAST TIME ON THE ARRON CREOLE TICKET BUT THEN BOLTED THE PARTY, IS ALLIED WITH LACHMON AND THE HINDUSTANIS. IT REMAINS ANYONE'S GUESS WHOM THE BULK OF THE JAVANESE WILL END UP SUPPORTING, AND THEY MAY VERY WELL BE THE DECISIVE FACTOR.

5. A FURTHER COMPLICATING FACTOR IS GEORGE HINDORIE. HINDORIE, A HINDUSTANI, WAS LACHMON'S PROTEGE AND THE NUMBER-TWO MAN IN THE VHP WHEN HE BROKE WITH LACHMON OVER THE INDEPENDENCE ISSUE AND WENT OVER TO ARRON. HE HAS NOW AN INDEPENDENT SMALL HINDUSTANI PARTY THAT WILL EITHER BE TAKEN INTO THE ARRON COALITION OR RUN IN COOPERATION WITH IT, DEPENDING ON WHICH THEY THINK WILL PRODUCE THE MOST VOTES. LACHMON IS ALSO DICKERING WITH ONE OR TWO SPLINTER CREOLE GROUPS, AS EACH MAJOR GROUP, CREOLE AND HINDUSTANI, WANTS AT LEAST TO HAVE ITS SHOW-CASE MEMBER OF THE OPPOSITE ETHNIC GROUP TO PROVE THAT IT IS NOT LILY-CREOLE OR LILY-HINDUSTANI.

6. AS TO THE ISSUES IN THE ELECTION, THEY ARE ESSENTIALLY
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NEGATIVE. THE ARRON GOVERNMENT HAS PRODUCED NO REAL ECONOMIC PROGRESS. ON THE CONTRARY, THIS FORMER SUGAR-EXPORTING COUNTRY HAS HAD TO IMPORT SUGAR FROM CUBA LAST YEAR AND THIS YEAR TOO. THE GOVERNMENT-RUN COMMODITY IMPORT SCHEME IS IN A SHAMBLES AND A JOKE, WITH ONE OF ITS LEADING OFFICIALS, CYRIEL KARG, A CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS MINISTER BRUMA, ALSO IN JAIL AWAITING TRIAL FOR MAKING OFF WITH GOVERNMENT MONEY. INFLATION IS BAD,

IF NOT RUNAWAY, WITH PRICES AND WAGING CHASING EACH OTHER MADLY AROUND THE SPIRAL. BAUXITE PRODUCTION, THE MAINSTAY OF THE ECONOMY, IS STALLED AT AROUND HALF OF THE PRODUCTION OF THREE TO FOUR YEARS AGO. WITH THE MASSIVE DUTCH DEVELOPMENT AID FUND AVAILABLE AT THE RATE OF \$150 MILLION A YEAR, WE ARE TOLD BY A KEY OFFICIAL THAT THEY HAVE SUCCEEDED IN DISBURSING (AS OPPOSED TO APPROVING, PLANNING, ANNOUNCING, CLAIMING CREDIT FOR, ETC.) ONLY \$50 MILLION OVER THE PAST TWO-YEAR PERIOD, OR ABOUT ONE-SIXTH OF THE AMOUNT AVAILABLE. EXCEPT FOR THE FACT OF INDEPENDENCE ITSELF, THEREFORE, (BUT THAT WAS NO MEAN ACHIEVEMENT) THE ARRON GOVERNMENT HAS LITTLE OF A POSITIVE RECORD TO STAND ON. ITS MAIN HOPE IS THAT PEOPLE WILL STILL FIND IT, WITH ALL ITS FAULTS, BETTER THAN THE ALTERNATIVE.

7. AND THE ALTERNATIVE HAS VERY LITTLE TO STAND ON EITHER. ALTHOUGH THEY CLAIM NOT TO HAVE OPPOSED INDEPENDENCE, BUT RATHER TO HAVE ONLY INSISTED ON PROPER CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES WHICH WERE FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL THE PEOPLE, THIS IS NOT GENRALLY ACCEPTED BY THE PEOPLE, WHO REMEMBER LACHMON AS INVEIGHING AGAINST INDEPENDENCE AND WANTING TO REMAIN A NETHERLANDER. AND, PERHAPS EVEN MORE TO THE POINT, MANY OF LACHMON'S SUPPORTERS WERE FRIGHTENED SUFFICIENTLY BY HIS FULMINATIONS TO LEAVE SURINAM FOR HOLLAND, THUS REDUCING HIS VOTERS

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BY AN UNDETERMINED NUMBER. THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE OF A POSITIVE PROGRAM ARTICULATED BY THE HINDUSTANI PARTY, ONLY CRITICISM OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT.

8. FORTUNATELY FOR THE U.S., THERE ARE NO PARTICULAR FOREIGN POLICY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO ALTERNARIVE CONTENDERS FOR POWER IN THE COUNTRY, NOR ARE THERE ANY SIGNIFICANT FOREIGN POLICY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE U.S. AND SURINAM. WE CAN THEREFORE AFFORD TO LOOK WITH RELATIVE EQUANIMITY ON THE ELECTIONS AND THEIR OUTCOME, IF NOT ON THE LONGER-TERM PROSPECT OF TROUBLES FOR US IN THIS COUNTRY IF THEY DO NOT GET STARTED ON A REAL ECONOMIC TAKEOFF AND SUBLIMATE, IF NOT SOLVE, THEIR ETHNIC PROBLEMS. WHAT WE NEED TO DO IN THE MEANTIME IS TO AVOID LIKE THE PLAGUE ANYTHING THAT COULD BE TAKEN OR MISTAKEN AS INTERFERENCE IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. THE GOVERNMENT WILL (AS WHAT GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT) BE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO TURN AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S VISIT TO ITS ELECTORAL GOOD. THE OPPOSITION WILL (AND WHAT OPPOSITION WOULD NOT) BE LOOKING FOR EXPRESSIONS OF UNIVERSAL TRUTHS APPLICABLE TO THE WORLD AS WHOLE TO SHOW THAT SOMETHING IS WRONG WHERE THE PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT, THE PRIME MINISTER AND NINE OTHER MINISTERS ARE CREOLE (ONE MINISTER BEING A

JAVANESE), AS WELL AS THE SPEAKER OF THE PARLIAMENT, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT AND FOUR OTHER JUSTICES (THE ONE OTHER JUSTICE BEING HINDUSTANI), THE COMMANDER OF THE ARMED FORCES, AND SO ON ALMOST AT INFINITY, WHILE THE CREOLES NUMBER FEWER THAN THE HINDUSTANI IN THE POPULATION.

9. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, THE VISIT OF AMBASSADOR YOUNG AND HIS PARTY WILL HAVE A NUMBER OF POSITIVE ASPECTS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF PRODUCING RESULTS THAT WILL SERVE U.S. INTERESTS FOR A LONG TIME TO COME. BEFORE THE VISIT WAS ANNOUNCED, AND WE WERE STILL PLAYING COY, A BUSINESSMAN ASKED THE AMBASSADOR WHY AMBASSADOR YOUNG WAS NOT COMING
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TO SURINAM, AS THEY THEN SUPPOSED. WHY SHOULD HE COME, ASKED THE AMBASSADOR? BECAUSE OF THE ROLE WE PLAYED IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR, WAS THE ANSWER. (SURINAM HAD A GARRISON OF U.S. TROOPS AND OUR AIR FORCE OPERATED OUT OF HERE ON THE ROUTE TO IRAN AND ALSO IN ANTI-SUBMARINE WARFARE.) OTHER PEOPLE, DISCUSSING THE SAME QUESTION, NOTE THAT PRESIDENTS EISENHOWER AND JOHNSON EACH VISITED SURINAM, ALTHOUGH WHEN PRESSED THEY ADMIT THAT THEY ONLY VISITED THE AIRFIELD AN HOUR OUT OF TOWN FOR REFUELING AND NEVER CAME INTO PARAMARIBO. BUT THE POINT IS THAT SURINAMERS REMEMBER AND TAKE GREAT PRIDE IN THEIR CONTACTS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND ITS LEADERS, AND THEY WILL BE GREATLY INTERESTED IN MR. YOUNG BECAUSE OF HIS CLOSE CONNECTION WITH PRESIDENT CARTER, HIS LEADERSHIP IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN THE U.S. AND HIS EFFORTS ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE. IT IS A STANDARD JOKE AMONG SURINAMERS THAT WHEN THEY GO ABROAD AND SAY THEY ARE FROM SURINAM, THE NEXT QUESTION ALWAYS IS, WHERE IS SURINAM. THIS VISIT WILL HELP PUT SURINAM ON THE MAP, AND THAT WILL MAKE THEM PROUD. THEY WILL ALSO BE PROUD TO FIND MR. YOUNG CONVERSANT WITH SOMETHING OF THEIR HISTORY AND PRESENT SITUATION. THEY WILL BE PLEASED THAT HE HAS COME HERE TO DISCUSS THEIR GOVERNMENT COMMON PROBLEMS ON THE WORLD STAGE AND IN THE UN. THEIR HEARTS WILL ALL BE IN IT, AND OUR RELATIONS ARE IN FOR A BOOST OF CONSIDERABLE PROPORTIONS.
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